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From the Baltimore Sun

3 get Assembly leadership posts

Two Democrats from city, one from area suburbs selected in House, Senate

By Andrew A. Green
Sun reporter

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Three Baltimore-area lawmakers will take on new leadership positions when the General Assembly convenes in January, assuring the region a voice in setting the legislature's agenda.

Sen. Nathaniel J. McFadden of Baltimore will become Senate president pro tempore, the second in command in that chamber. Sen. Edward J. Kasemeyer, who represents Baltimore and Howard counties, will take McFadden's place as Senate majority leader. And Del. Talmadge Branch of Baltimore will become House majority whip. All three are Democrats.

The posts are considered part of the senior leadership, meaning these lawmakers will have a strong hand in deciding the fate of legislation.

"It gives me an opportunity to work with the senior leadership and make sure we meet some significant milestones in the House," Branch said.

The moves maintain the Baltimore area's influence in the General Assembly, despite the gradually increasing influence of the Washington region that has come with a growth in population there. Branch replaces Del. Anthony G. Brown of Prince George's County, the lieutenant governor-elect, and McFadden replaces Sen. Ida G. Ruben of Montgomery County, who lost in the Democratic primary.

House Speaker Michael E. Busch, who made the decision to elevate Branch, said the choice was about personality and ability, not geography.

"He brings the temperament, the political savvy and the ability to work with other members of the legislature that is important for the majority whip," Busch said.

Kasemeyer said his new post will enable him to work closely with the incoming administration of Gov.-elect Martin O'Malley on its legislative agenda.

"If the job works out the way it was presented, it's going to be very interesting," Kasemeyer said.

The moves in the Senate take on added significance with Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller's announcement that he won't seek re-election in 2010. McFadden had a prominent role in the Senate leadership, but Kasemeyer's promotion will give him a higher profile as senators jockey to replace the long-time leader of their chamber.

As part of the shuffle, Kasemeyer will give up his role as chairman of the capital budget subcommittee, a panel that helps decide what public works projects get funded each year. That seat will go to Sen. James E. DeGrange Sr., an Anne Arundel County Democrat.

Branch will keep his seat on the House Appropriations Committee but will give up his role as vice chairman. That job will go to Del. James E. Proctor Jr. of Prince George's County.

In another move within the legislature, Baltimore's House delegation chose Del. Curtis S. Anderson as its chairman. He replaces Del. Salima S. Marriott, who lost a bid for the state Senate this year.

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Sun reporter Larry Carson contributed to this article.

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